

This is an interview with Mr. Wells Pope of Vernal, Utah on the 31st of October 1978. This interview is being conducted at the Golden Age Center. My name is Dorothy Green, of the Golden Age Center.

Wells Pope (Wells): My name is Wells L. Pope, my father's name is John William Pope. He had the first car in Vernal, it was one-cylinder Cadillac. He shipped it from Denver to Watson, which is a narrow-gauge railroad in Mack, Colorado. From there, he drove it to Vernal across the Green River on the ferry boat at a place called Alhandra. On his way to Vernal, he met a man named John Glen, who had a big fat daughter. He kicked her out of the buggy.

Johnny Pope was coming to Vernal with an automobile. This Cadillac would do fifteen miles an hour full speed ahead, and he got my grandmother Beers in the car and she said, "Now, Johnny, none of this speeding." One day he stopped, he had a jewelry store, the first jewelry store in Vernal, in those days, a horse....a buggy. So he drove his Cadillac on up the road, but when he come back, the horse was dead, it scared it right to death, the sight of that buggy.

The way he got his gasoline, he got his gasoline by shipping it to the drugstore in five-gallon cans. There was no service station in Vernal, then. He also had the first jewelry store in Vernal and the first garage in Vernal.

Dorothy Green (DG): Nobody used gasoline for anything but for cars then, I guess.

Wells: There wasn't any cars, it was the first car in Vernal, so he shipped the gas through the drugstore in five-gallon cans.

DG: You were telling me something about the kids were chasing the car in the street or something?

Wells: The kids would come along and tag onto his Cadillac and he'd have to get them to let go 'cause he couldn't pull them.

DG: What color was the car?

Wells: I don't remember. That car was in 1908, and I was only two years old, so, I don't remember the car. All I know about the car is what my father told me.

DG: Did other people get cars then, after that?

Wells: Oh, yes, there's a few come after that. They got a picture of a car here that was a big Case. You've seen that car, it had carbide lights. I remember that car.

DG: That was the name of it, the brand name was Case?

Wells: Case.

DG: Huh, I've never heard that name.

Wells: Carbide lights. Put a little water in and get out and light the lights and shut the lid on. And you were lucky if you could see five feet ahead of the car.

DG: So, did your dad's car have lights or not?

Wells: The first Cadillac? No. It just had a curly stick to steer it with. You get in through the back seat along the side, there was no top on it.

DG: Did he keep it in the barn or what?

Wells: I don't remember where he kept it. See, I was only two years old when he had it. The first garage he had, he bought out a livery stable and made a garage out of it. Model T Fords, he sold them for many years and then he sold Plymouths and Buicks. The only kind of cars he sold, I guess. He sold one man a car by the name of Bennion. He rode right through the back of the garage hollering, "Whoa!" He thought they had to holler "whoa" at this car.

I sold a car to a fellow over in Deep Creek, his name was Ruel Terry, a Model T Ford. Coming down through Maeser, a bicycle passed us. He says, "Well I'll be a SOB!" Pulled that gear of that old Ford down and passed that bicycle! Wouldn't want it. It went fifteen miles an hour. Then he had an old Stanley Steamer once.

DG: What's a Stanley Steamer? That was a steam driven car?

Wells: Yeah.

DG: Who had that?

Wells: My father.

DG: Oh really? How old were you then?

Wells: I remember that car. I must have been ten to twelve years old then. I remember the Stanley Steamer.

DG: How did they work?

Wells: A fire under the boiler. The boiler got hot and the steam run through the steam engine.

DG: Huh, I guess we could use one of those nowadays when they run out of gasoline, huh?

Wells: We did have a Stanley Steamer, a beautiful car once, that they could get up steam in one minute. But the oil companies wouldn't put up with that, so they bought it out. It would cheat them out of too much oil, see. Bet ya they could make steamers right today. It would go one

hundred miles on a gallon of kerosene. But the oil companies wouldn't put up with that—cheat them out of too much money.

DG: Wow. When did you start working for the oil company?

Wells: I worked in the oil fields for thirty years. I started in when I was probably twenty-one or twenty-two, dressing tools, building rigs, roughneck.

DG: That's where you learned all your jokes, huh?

Wells: Most of them. (laughs)